

PROMOTING LIFETIME ACTIVITY FOR YOUTH

A program of the Arizona Department of Health Services
Funded by the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant (PHHSBG)

PROBLEM:

Physical inactivity is among the top preventable causes of death because of its role as a primary risk factor for obesity and chronic disease. Despite progress towards reducing other major chronic disease risk factors, there has been little improvement in increasing physical activity levels. Research indicates that adults do not get enough physical activity to meet the current recommendations from the Surgeon General's Report on Physical Activity and Health, which states that every American should accumulate 60 minutes or more of moderate to vigorous physical activity on most, preferably all, days of the week. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS), the reported percentage of Arizonans that did not engage in any leisure time physical activity over the past five years averages 38%. This is significantly worse than the first half of the decade, 23.8%. Encouraging physical activity in adults is important since physically inactive people are almost twice as likely to develop CVD as a person who engages in regular physical activity.

In the fall of 2000, the CDC issued a report, Promoting Better Health for Young People Through Physical Activity and Sports. This report states that our nation's children are inactive, unfit, and increasingly overweight. Physical inactivity threatens to reverse the decade's hard work to reduce death from CVD and other chronic diseases as well as to devastate our health care budget.

BACKGROUND:

The Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant (PHHSBG) is a federal grant given to states through the CDC. The grant's intended use is to enable states to make progress toward achieving the objectives of *Healthy People 2010*. Nationwide, including Arizona, most states use the funds for programs that do not have any other source of funding. In 1996, the Arizona's PHHSBG coronary heart disease prevention program began to focus exclusively on increasing physical activity. The PHHSBG allocates funds to the county health departments for implementation of school, home and community-based programs to increase physical activity. **All local program activities; including school-based programs are coordinated by county health department staff.**

PROGRAM GOAL:

Is to reduce the prevalence of obesity and chronic disease (such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, and some types of cancer) by increasing the number of Arizonan youth who get at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity on most days of the week.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

- To increase the number of 4th-8th grade youth in participating schools who accumulate at least 60 minutes of daily, moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity.

- To teach skills that promote self-directed lifetime activity to youth in participating schools.
- To increase the number of 4th-8th grade youth in participating schools that earn the PALA (President's Active Lifestyle Award).
- To foster the value and creation opportunities to be physically active for school faculty, staff and students in participating schools.
- To increase the number of parents, whose children participate in Promoting Lifetime Activity for Youth, as well as adults living in communities around targeted schools, who get the recommended amount of physical activity.
- To increase public awareness of community opportunities for physical activity.
- To build the capacity of local health departments to promote physical activity in their communities.

TARGET GROUP:

The Promoting Lifetime Activity for Youth program focuses on youth in fourth through eighth grades. Research indicates most children are very active until about grade three, when activity levels begin to decline. This decline continues until the early 20s with a marked change in early adolescence. The targeting of grades four through eight is designed to prevent the decline of physical activity levels by intervening during the ages when the decline first begins.

PROMOTING LIFETIME ACTIVITY FOR YOUTH DESCRIPTION:

Promoting Lifetime Activity for Youth is a program that is offered to schools statewide and free of charge. It is a three step, teacher-directed program designed to promote 60 minutes of daily, independent physical activity in youth. The program duration is at least 12 weeks.

Step 1: Classroom teachers teach the Promoting Lifetime Activity for Youth philosophy by discussing the importance of physical activity and demonstrate that activity can be simple, fun and require little athletic ability. The emphasis in this first step is to get youngsters moving with something as simple as "walking and talking with a friend" or playground games.

Step 2: Teachers introduce new activities that students might enjoy. They direct a daily 15-minute activity break for the students for a minimum of three weeks.

Step 3: Teachers implement step 3 throughout the remainder of the twelve weeks and in many cases for the duration of the school year. This step teaches and encourages self-direction in a variety of physical activities. The goal is to encourage student independence in achieving 60 minutes of daily activity at school and at home. The school activity break is now used to teach activities that can be done during school free time and at home, with family, friends, or alone, and in the community. All participating students receive a log sheet.

At the end of the twelve weeks students who have earned the PALA awards receive their awards and the school is encouraged to give public recognition to those students. Teachers receive program materials, activity logs for students, activity card sets, a wall chart to record students' progress, and classroom equipment such as balls and jump ropes.

TIMELINE:

Implementation of the Promoting Lifetime Activity for Youth program began in 1996 in twelve counties. Since then, Promoting Lifetime Activity for Youth has been implemented in approximately

160 schools, reaching 24,000 students and 900 teachers each year. The program will be entered the eighth year of implementation in the fall of 2003.

EVALUATION:

The first five years, participants and parents were asked to complete a self-reported evaluation. The results have shown that overall, the students' attitudes about physical activity became more positive and the number of students reporting that they are not physically active has decreased as a result of the Promoting Lifetime Activity for Youth program.

In January 2002, a research study was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the Promoting Lifetime Activity for Youth program. Thirty-five schools participated in the study. Participants were 606 4th grade students (315 girls, 291 boys) and their teachers. The mean age for boys and for girls was 9.8 years. The study was limited to fourth graders to ensure that each child had no previous exposure to the Promoting Lifetime Activity for Youth program.

Data was collected using three measures; pedometer step counts, body mass index (BMI) and an attitude inventory, the Children's Attraction to Physical Activity (CAPA). Prior to the study all Arizona elementary schools were placed into one of four groups (Promoting Lifetime Activity for Youth and PE, PE only, Promoting Lifetime Activity for Youth only, and No treatment). The groups were based on the school's participation in the Promoting Lifetime Activity for Youth program and the existence of a PE program (defined as a program taught by a PE teacher). Because it is an intervention designed to promote physical activity, PE was used as an independent variable. PE was also used as an independent variable because the impact of PE on physical activity levels, BMI, and attraction to physical activity could not be ignored. Schools were randomly selected for each group.

Results of the evaluation indicate that the implementation of the Promoting Lifetime Activity for Youth program is effective in increasing the physical activity level of children, especially girls. The findings have interesting implications, particularly with the recent emphasis on increasing the physical activity levels of girls.

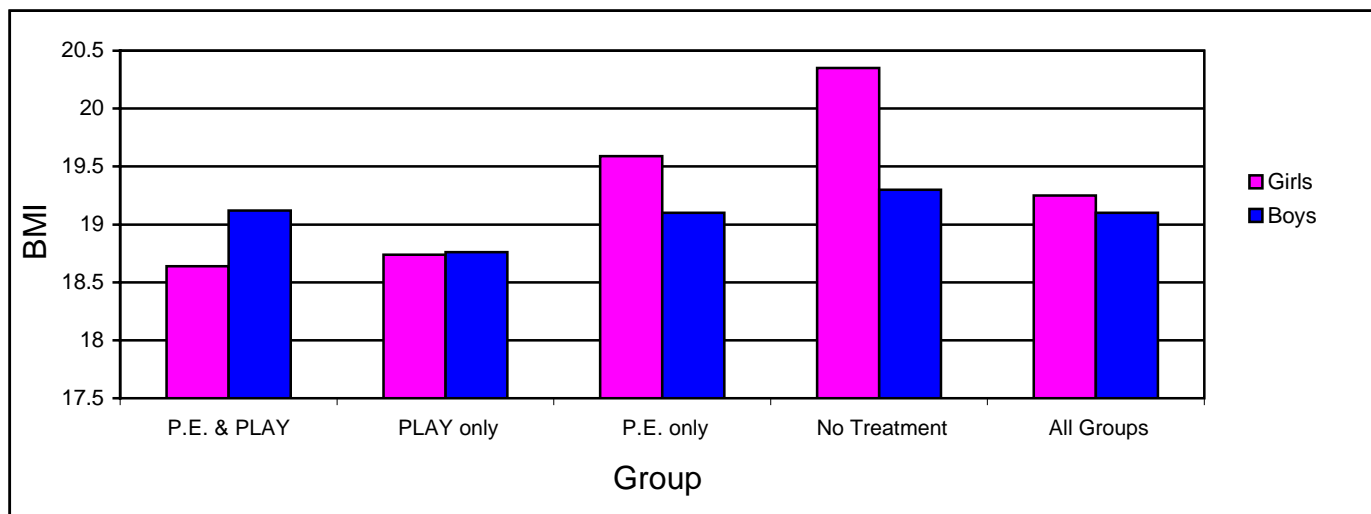
The least active children had the highest BMIs. Data showed no significant differences between the groups. However, because of the short length of the intervention, it is difficult to use data from this study to draw conclusions regarding the effectiveness of Promoting Lifetime Activity for Youth in combating overweight and obesity. Using Promoting Lifetime Activity for Youth over the course of several years may potentially impact the BMI of students.

Attraction to physical activity, as measured by the CAPA, did not appear to be impacted by the Promoting Lifetime Activity for Youth program. However, the most active boys reported the highest attraction to physical activity. Personality traits such as attraction to physical activity change slowly and a 12-week intervention program is not likely to impact CAPA scores significantly.

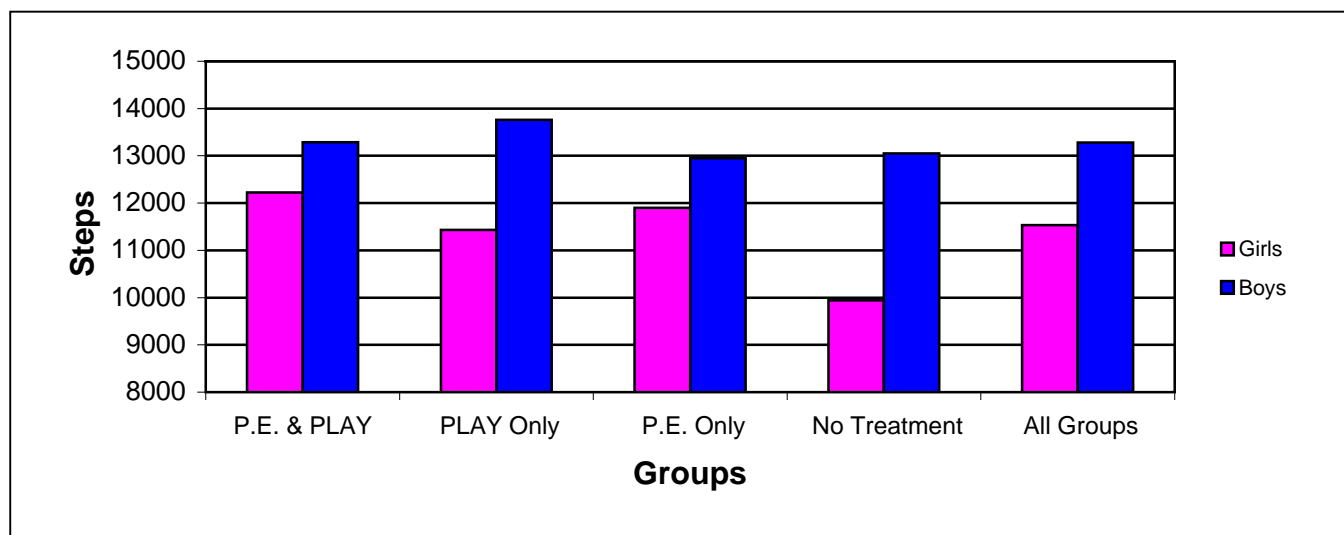
This study was published in the Journal of School Health in October 2003.

Below you will find graphs of the study:

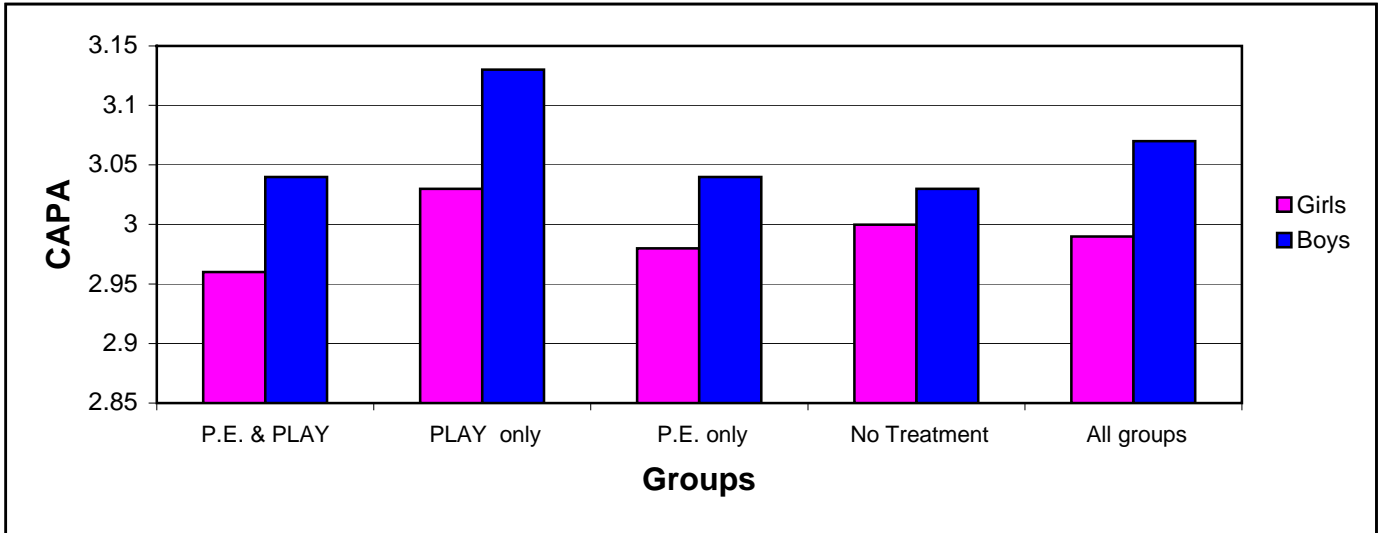
BMI by Group and Sex



Steps by Group and Sex



CAPA by Group and Sex



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

For additional information contact:

Carol Vack or Christine Eley
Physical Activity Program
150 N. 18th Avenue, Suite 300
Phoenix, AZ 85007
Telephone: (602) 364-2401
Fax: (602) 542-1265
eleyc@azdhs.gov